

# VR

## IMAGES *of Success*



**2009-2010 Annual Report**

North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

*Our cover photos are of NCDVRS consumers on the job — Left to right, Bonny West, an executive assistant at Priska Incorporated in Washington, N.C.; Scott Tuttle, an appliance repair technician at Atlantic Appliance and Hardware in Wilmington; and Latisha Anderson, a nurse at Holly Hill Hospital in Raleigh.*



# VR

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## The Year by the Numbers

- VR assisted 5,961 North Carolinians in achieving successful employment outcomes.
- Independent living objectives were achieved by 2,281 Independent Living program participants.
- Assistive Technology provided 10,015 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Disability Determination closed 212,024 cases involving Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid Disability benefits.



## VR in 2010: Part of the Solution

The year was another challenging one for the division, with the state's economic difficulties continuing to affect our spending and services. Despite the challenges, the division stayed true to a 90-year history of providing among the most cost-effective of any government services.

State to state, people with disabilities for whom VR services lead to obtaining or maintaining jobs are able, on average, to "pay back" the cost of their rehabilitation in two to four years, through taxes on subsequent employment. Further, their employment generates big savings for the federal treasury and the Social Security Trust Fund in the cost of no-longer-needed benefits.



**Linda Harrington**  
**Director**

**N.C. Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation Services**

But these savings, though significant, are still a by-product of more important results. Last year, after receiving our independent living services, 2,358 people with disabilities began to take a bigger part in the lives of their families and communities. Through VR's employment services, 5,961 of our consumers either obtained employment or were able to stay on the job despite a disability.

Last year, especially with the help of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, we took these vital core services in new directions, expanding our contributions to consumers, their communities and local economies.

On-the-job training, long an effective tool in our job placement efforts, compensates employers for wages paid to workers who they've agreed to train. This past year, federal recovery funds made possible a 100 percent reimbursement for the training, an even bigger win for businesses.

The division embarked on a fresh commitment to provide small-business supports to more North Carolinians with disabilities. With the help of recovery funds, VR retained a self-employment program specialist, revised self-employment policies and developed statewide staff training.

The special federal funding also allowed VR to award 21 community rehabilitation programs across the state nearly \$3 million dollars to increase services for people with disabilities – for example, to train individuals to become nursing assistants and office clerks.

These and other pursuits will continue to be enhanced by our participation in the Department of Health and Human Services' "DHHS Excels" initiative – an approach that aims to mold departmental offerings into an accessible, effective continuum of services for all our citizens.

While, in the coming year, the state's finances may remain uncertain, our staff will remain among the most dedicated in state government. We'll continue to enjoy support from the agencies and policymakers we partner with – and the administrators and legislators who provide the leadership we'll need to continue to serve North Carolinians with disabilities.

Scott

*Atlantic* BRAND  
SOURCE  
APPLIANCE & HARDWARE

## Evaluation and Counseling



**Scott Tuttle**  
**Wilmington**

VR provides services to people with disabilities to assist them in getting or keeping a job. Rehabilitation begins with an assessment of the consumer's strengths, skills and experience. Jointly developed by the consumer and counselor, each individual's plan for employment is carefully monitored and, if needed, adjustments are made. Plans may include: diagnostic services; physical and mental restoration; assistive technology; transportation; modifications to vehicle, home, job and worksite; and others.

Among consumers who completed their rehabilitation plans in FFY 2010, VR provided:

- Assessment services to 10,486 individuals;
- Diagnosis and treatment of impairments to 5,933;
- Counseling and guidance to 4,093.

Categories of services offered beyond the assessment stage include: employment services, rehabilitation technology, training, and personal assistance services.

## Benefits Counseling

In North Carolina, the federal Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach initiative operates under the name Making Employment a New Success (MEANS). Under the program, community work incentives coordinators offer group or one-to-one counseling to recipients of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability benefits to help them understand how going to work often has a less-than-feared effect on their benefits payments. For recipients of traditional VR services, the counseling has helped remove disincentives to seek employment.

- VR's MEANS program has served more than 12,225 Social Security beneficiaries since the program's inception in 2000.
- The program is joined by similar initiatives under Easter Seals UCP of North Carolina, Life Plan Trust and Tri-County Industries of Rocky Mount to offer benefits planning assistance throughout North Carolina.







## Deaf/Hard of Hearing

VR provides services to individuals who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or late-deafened to assist them in preparing for, obtaining, or maintaining employment. Counselors work with consumers to help them make informed choices about their job goals and what, among a range of specialized services and equipment, is needed to help meet those goals. Located in 12 of VR's local offices, specially trained counselors assist citizens with hearing loss across North Carolina.

In FFY 2010 VR:

- Provided services to 2,505 consumers with hearing loss.
- Assisted 374 consumers with hearing loss achieve successful employment outcomes.
- Continued to equip local offices with advanced technology to improve consumers' access to services and their employment outcomes.

## School-to-Life Services

VR has partnered with local schools across the state to assist students in making a successful transition from their school life to jobs and careers. Services are designed to assist individuals with disabilities – physical, mental or learning related – who require assistance to prepare for, locate, or maintain employment compatible with their interests, skills and potential. For eligible students, VR offers vocational guidance and assistance with training, job placement, and other services. Referrals may be made by a parent, teacher, social worker, school counselor or nurse, or an individual may refer himself or herself.

- In FFY 2010, VR served 17,172 youth, 22 and under, with disabilities.
- VR counselors provided services to 11,143 high school students in 354 high schools in the state.



**Latisha Anderson**  
Raleigh

## Employment Services

Getting or keeping a job is the main goal of the partnership between the consumer and VR. The process begins with evaluation of the consumer's interests, abilities and aptitudes for different kinds of jobs. The employment plan may include college or vocational training, on-the-job training, job



coaching, or supported employment. VR staff often provide information on résumé preparation, interviewing, developing job leads, and assistance in locating a job. After employment, the VR counselor and consumer stay in contact to help make sure the job is a good match.

- In FFY 2010, VR assisted 5,961 North Carolinians in achieving a successful employment outcome.
- Consumers' weekly earnings before receiving services averaged \$49. After employment, the average – reflecting a range of earning levels and full- and part-time jobs – increased to \$280.
- Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$1.67 million per week.



**Bonny West (top)  
and employer  
Priscilla Denney  
Wilmington**

## Services to Employers

Crucial to VR's mission are North Carolina's businesses who each year hire thousands of individuals served by VR. Because each of our referrals is screened, employers can feel more confident that they are a good prospect for their company, and they benefit from services like customized follow-up and on-the-job training that can help make sure the new employee remains a good match for the job. For more than 90 years, VR has been the state's premier resource on issues related to disabilities in the workplace.

- Screening, job-matching and training can reduce employers' recruitment time and costs.
- Employers can benefit from on-site consultations by professionals like our rehabilitation engineers who help ensure that the physical workplace is a good fit for the new employee.
- Employers can benefit from these services at no cost. They may also enjoy tax incentives for hiring a VR referral.

## Community Rehabilitation

VR is able to extend its services for people with disabilities through programmatic partnerships with community rehabilitation programs



across the state. These programs are equipped to offer a range of job-placement and support services to VR consumers with specialized needs. Community rehabilitation services include: vocational evaluation; job development; job coaching; individual or group supported employment; and work adjustment activities designed to help individuals improve work skills, work behaviors, and emotional/physical tolerances for a range of jobs.

- In FFY 2010, 9,431 consumers received services from community rehabilitation programs that have partnered with VR.
- Of that number, 1,982 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- VR directly administers two community rehabilitation programs – in Goldsboro and Morganton – serving individuals in eastern and western North Carolina.

## Supported Employment

VR consumers find themselves at many different stages in the type of jobs they prefer, the skills they offer, and their readiness for work. Many consumers benefit from more intensive support services to become acclimated to new employment or in remaining on the job. After placement, supported employment can mean job training at the worksite for as long as needed or a job coach to assist the employee on a longer-term basis – perhaps with daily, weekly or intermittent visits.

- In FFY 2010, 4,527 consumers received supported employment services.
- Of that number, 923 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- Supported employment services may be supplemented by or directly provided by a local, VR-approved community rehabilitation program.

## Rehabilitation Engineering

With technology and a commitment to creative problem-solving, VR's rehabilitation engineers help consumers overcome physical barriers in a number of areas, including education, transportation, employment, independent living and recreation. Services can cover: adaptive computer access; augmentative communication; seating/mobility; and home, vehicle, and worksite modifications. Engineers

often consult with employers to assist in removing architectural barriers so that new employees with disabilities or current employees who have acquired disabilities may be accommodated.

- In FFY 2010, 1,533 barrier removal projects at consumers' residences were successfully completed, allowing them to remain independent and avoid moving to a care facility.
- During the same period, vehicle modification projects were completed for 123 consumers.
- Rehabilitation engineering projects completed for consumers exceeded \$5.5 million in cost.

## Independent Living

Independence can often mean living in the home and community of choice. To help its consumers achieve that end, the Independent Living program offers evaluation and counseling, vehicle modifications, peer counseling and advocacy, rehabilitation engineering, prosthetics and orthotics, personal assistance services, recreational therapy, and assistance with leisure activities. Independent living counselors and program participants jointly plan how to achieve a viable, cost-effective alternative to institutional living.

- In FFY 2010, 5,295 individuals received services under an Individualized Plan for Independent Living (IPIL).
- IPILs were completed by 2,281 program participants.
- Personal assistance services were provided to 354 individuals at an average cost of \$11,050 per year.

## Assistive Technology

For people of all ages and disabilities, assistive technology devices can make everyday living more independent. Offering access in all 100 counties, VR's Assistive Technology (AT) staff demonstrate how assistive technology can improve computer use, daily living activities, mobility, communication, education, leisure, alarm systems, and environmental controls. AT offers short-term loans for trying out devices, information/referral services, rights advocacy for individuals and families, and financial resource information. During 2010, the Assistive Technology Program:

- Provided 10,015 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.



- Provided training and support services to 45,391 individuals.
- Co-sponsored the nineteenth annual Assistive Technology Expo with 1,200 attendees.

## Disability Determination

Under an agreement with the Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services (DDS) receives applications from SSA offices across the state and adjudicates Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments. DDS performs the same function with Medicaid claims received from the state's county departments of social services.

- In FFY 2010, DDS closed 212,024 cases involving Social Security Disability Income, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid disability benefits.
- The average time for processing SSDI cases – from receipt to closure – was 105.6 days.

## Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that serves anyone seeking information, applying for services or receiving services from agencies receiving federal monies under the Rehabilitation Act. These include the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Services for the Blind, the independent living rehabilitation programs within those divisions, and the the state's centers for independent living. Services include bridging gaps that may occur in accessing rehabilitation services, assisting with the appeals process and providing information and referral.

- In FFY 2010, CAP increased its information and referrals to individuals by nine percent, and
- Provided outreach to 14,714 individuals in traditionally unserved or underserved populations.



# North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Data Summary: Federal Fiscal Year 2009 – 2010

<b>Overview: Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services</b>	
<b>Consumers Served in FFY 2010</b>	<b>57,110</b>
Consumers still developing an Individualized Plan of Employment at the last day of the FFY	5,626
<b>Consumers Served through Individualized Plans of Employment</b>	<b>44,361</b>
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	33,764
Successful employment outcomes	5,961

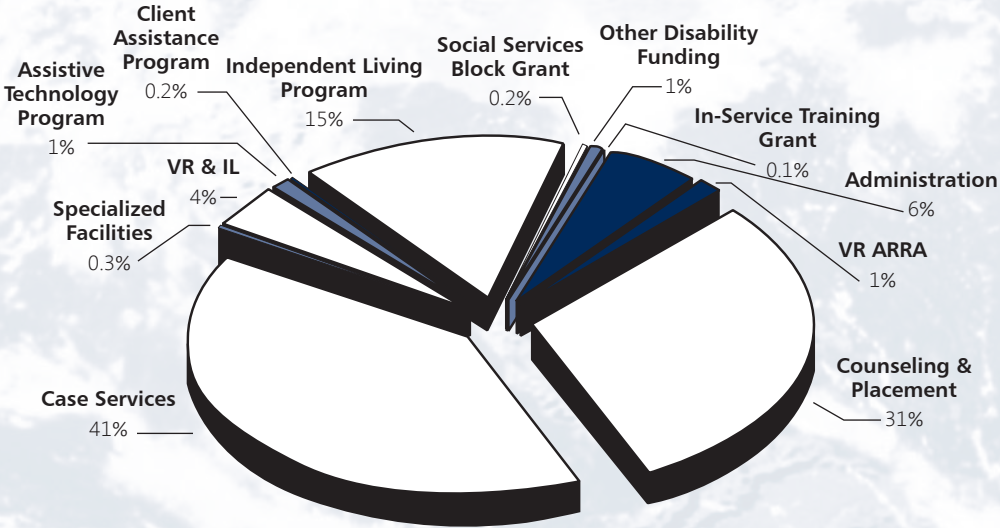
<b>Earnings for Consumers with Successful Employment Outcomes</b>			
<b>Average Earnings</b>	<b>Weekly Earnings</b>	<b>Monthly Earnings</b>	<b>Annual Earnings</b>
At Case Opening	\$49.52	\$214.58	\$2,574.94
At Case Closure	\$280.69	\$1,216.32	\$14,595.83
Average Increase	\$231.17	\$1,001.74	\$12,020.89
<b>Total Increase</b>	<b>\$1,374,080</b>	<b>\$5,954,346.67</b>	<b>\$71,452,160.00</b>

<b>Consumers by Disability: Vocational Rehabilitation / Independent Living</b>		
<b>Primary Disability</b>	<b>VR Eligible Served</b>	<b>IL Eligible Served</b>
Sensory/Communicative	2,657	307
Physical	16,249	5,642
Cognitive	17,728	1
Mental Illness	14,124	6
Other Mental Disabilities	6,346	4
Major Impairment not yet recorded	6	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,110</b>	<b>5,964</b>

Statewide Overview: Independent Living Rehabilitation Program	
Consumers Served in FFY 2010	5,964
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	2,529
Independent Living Plans of Services Completed	2,281
Individuals Receiving Personal Assistance Services	354
Average per person cost for personal assistance services	\$11,050.85

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

### FFY 2010 Program Expenditures



Administration <b>\$8,269,760</b>	Case Services <b>\$58,190,661</b>
Counseling & Placement <b>\$45,161,386</b>	VR & IL Appropriation Transfers <b>\$6,128,860</b> within DHHS
Specialized Facilities <b>\$495,519</b>	Client Assistance Program <b>\$296,561</b>
Assistentive Technology Program <b>\$1,706,416</b>	Social Services Block Grant <b>\$251,018</b>
Independent Living Program <b>\$22,187,698</b>	In-Service Training Grant <b>\$177,908</b>
Other Disability Funding <b>\$1,238,270</b>	VR ARRA <b>\$1,708,286</b>
VR ARRA <b>\$1,708,286</b>	

## VR “All-Stars”

In 2010, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services honored staff members in Charlotte, Greenville and Raleigh with its ninth annual “VR All-Star Awards.” The categories and winners are:



**Billy Ross**



**Connie Rhynes**



**Tania Bowers**

- **Leadership** – Billy Ross, unit manager of the agency’s Greenville office, cited for outstanding achievement in leadership. The award praised Ross for his “patience, fairness and ability to remain calm and optimistic during challenging times” and for being “an effective, supportive and motivating supervisor who is always there when you need him.”
- **Customer Service** – Connie Rhynes, a human resource consultant in the agency’s Raleigh headquarters, cited for her customer service. The award recognized her “outstanding breadth and depth of knowledge,” an attitude that is “respectful, compassionate and supportive” and an “accurate, upbeat and soothing approach to her customer’s needs and questions.”
- **Creativity** – Cited for creativity was Tania Bowers, a rehabilitation counselor in the Charlotte office. The award honored Bowers for spearheading peer-support training to benefit clients with mental health issues, for her work to improve long-term vocational supports for this clientele and for her willingness to use non-traditional approaches to achieve her goals.

The three were chosen from 10 recipients of the division’s regional “Superstar Awards.” Employee volunteers manage the awards program in which agency staff nominate and vote on their co-workers.

Division Director Linda Harrington thanked the honorees and congratulated them “on achieving the greatest honor this agency bestows.... With this highest statewide recognition, you have been honored by your co-workers as ‘the best of the best.’”

Health and Human Services Secretary Lanier M. Cansler also congratulated the recipients, saying that the work of the division “is an integral, important part of the department’s mission to serve the people of North Carolina, most especially those with disabilities. The contributions for which you’ve been recognized are indispensable in carrying out that work.”



## **State Rehabilitation Council: 2009-10**

Bobbie Grammer – Chair  
Davan Cloninger – Chair-Elect  
Kacie Blalock – Immediate Past Chair  
Michael Maybee  
Doreen Byrd  
Celeste Hunt  
Mark Ezzell  
Horace Hunt  
Darryl Jackson  
Karen Moya-Stallings  
D. Jason Reynolds  
Dennis Troy  
Richard Crews  
Kathy Brack  
Carol Walker  
Davan Cloninger

### **Ex Officio:**

Linda Harrington, Director  
Jacqueline Tetterton

## **State Independent Living Council: 2009-10**

Barbara Davis – Chair  
Sandy McMillan  
Deborah Smith  
Dorothy Frye  
Philip Woodward  
Randy Powell  
Kelly Rowe Rodriguez  
Brian Jones  
Ruth Haines  
Camille Leacock  
Michael Martin  
Jeff McCloud  
Kay Miley  
Teresa Staley  
Keith Greenarch  
Clyde S. Goodwin  
William Donahue  
Gloria Bellamy

### **Ex Officio:**

Vicki Smith  
Cynthia Temoshenko  
Susanna Bourgeois  
Holly Riddle  
Toby Easton



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## **N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

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State of North Carolina | Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor  
Department of Health and Human Services | Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary  
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